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HISTORY

OF

Reynard the FOX.



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Reynard the FOX.

C H A P T E R I.

A great Feast proclaimed by the Lion, at which the Wolf, his Wife, and the Hound complain against Reynard the Fox.



IT was when the woods was cloathed with green attire, and the meadows adorned with fragrant flowers ; when birds chaunted forth their harmonious songs, the Lion made a grdat feast at hi

palace of Sanden ; and issued a proclamation for all the beasts and birds to come thereto without delay, on pain of his contempt,

Now being assembled before the King, there were some beasts found there that made great complaints against the Fox, (who was absent) particularly Hegrin the Wolf, who thus began :

Dread Sovereign,

I beseech thee to take pity on me and my wife, for the injuries we have sustained by that false creature Reynard the Fox; who came into my house by violence, and bestrit my children in such a rank manner that they became instantly blind ; for which I expect from him amends, and from your Majesty Justice.

When the Wolf had ended, up starts Curtis the Hound, and complaining against Reynard, said, That in the cold season of the winter, when he was kept from all manner of prey, and half starved, having but one poor pudding left, he, the said Reynard had taken it from him.

Tibert the Cat, upon this got up, and falling before the King, said, My Lord, I must confess that Reynard the Fox is

much complained against, yet each of these will find enough for his clearing, for concerning the offence against the Hound it was committed long since; the puding was mine, though I complained not, for I got it out of the mill by night when the miller lay asleep.

Here the Panther interrupted the Cat, saying, It was just and good to complain against Reynard, for all the world knows he is a thief, murderer, and ravisher; and false to every creature: I will tell you what I saw him do yesterday to Kayward the Hare, who is now standing in the King's presence. He promised him to teach him to sing his Credo, and make him a good chaplain; but had I not come by he had killed him, for he had got poor Kayward between his legs, and was squeezing his throat: therefore, O my Lord, if you suffer him to go unpunished that hath broken the peace, your children hereafter will bear the shadow of this evil. — Certainly Panther, said Isegrim, what you say is true.

C H A P. II.

Grimbard the Brock's Speech in Behalf
of Reynard.

Grimbard the Brock, who was Reynard's sister's son, being moved with anger, said, Isgrim, you are malicious, and as the proverb is, Malice never speaks well of any one: I wish you would agree that he who hath done the most injury of either my cousin Reynard or you, should die the death; was he here at court, and in favour as you are, he would make you ask forgiveness, for have you not bitten and torn him with your venomous teeth? have you forgot how you cheated him of his plaice, of which you left him nothing but the bones; also the flitch of bacon, the taste of which was so good, that you eat it up from him alone, though he gat it at the danger of his own life: I must confess my kinsman lay with his wife, but it was seven years before Isgrim married her; so what credit gets he by slandering his wife, when she is troubled at it.

Now

Now comes Kayward the Hare with his complaint, which is but a trifle ; for if he would not learn his lesson, can you blame his schoolmaster Reynard for giving due correction ; and lastly, for Curtise, had he not stole the pudding himself ? and who can blame Reynard for taking away stolen goods from a thief : my uncle is a gentleman, a true man, and cannot endure falsehood ; he does nothing but by the council of a priest ; and since the King hath made peace, he hath hurt no body ; he eats but once a day, he chastifeth his body, wears a hair shirt, and hath eat no meat for this year past ; he hath forsaken his castle, a poor hermitage retains him ; he hath distributed all his wealth, and lives upon alms, and doth infinite penance for his sins.



C H A P. III.

The Cock's Complaint against Reynard,
and the King's Answer.

THus while Grimbard stood preaching
was brought upon a bier by Canticleer
the Cock, a dead Hen, whose head Rey-
nard had bitten off: On each side stood two
sorrowful Hens, sisters to the deceased,
each bearing a bruning torch, and crying
out, Alack-and-a-well-a-day for the los
of our sister Copple: And being come be-
fore the King, they kneeled down, and
said,

"Most mighty King,
" Vouchsafe to redress the great inju-
ries that Reynard the Fox hath done
me and my children, now weeping before
you. In April last, in fair weather, and I
in the midst of my pride, having seven fair
daughters, was envied by Reynard, who
made many attempes to get at us by scal-
ing the wall, but w~~e~~ repulsed, and had
his skin tore by the dogs: but at last he
came like a hermit with a letter to read,
signed with your Majesty's seal, in which
I found you had made peace throughout

your whole realm, and that no beast nor fowl should hurt one another ; and as for him he was become a Monk, did penance for his sins, shewed me his books and beads, the hair shirt next his skin, and vowed to eat no more flesh ; and saying his Credo, laid himself down under a bench.—I was glad to hear this, and took no heed, but clucked my children together ; but false Reynard crept between us and the gate, seized on, bore away, and destroyed fifteen of them ; and yesterday Copple my daughter, now on the bier, was rescued from him by a kennel of Hounds : so for all this, I beg of your Majesty Justice."

The King then turning to Grimbard, said, Your uncle hath prayed and fasted well, hath he not ? I vow he shall suffer for this — Mr Canticleer I have heard your complaint, and will grant your request ; give your daughter solemn burial, and I will consult with my Lords to give you right against the murderer.—This the King immediately did, and it was agreed to send Bruin the Bear to summon Reynard to appear before the King to answer to the heavy crimes laid to his charge.

C H A P . V .

Bruin the Bear unfortunate in h's Message
to Reynard the Fox,

TH E next morning went Bruin to Malepardus, a high mountain where Reynard had a castle, and knocked at the gate, he cried aloud, Sir Reynard, are you at home? I am Bruin your kinsman, come to summons you to court, to answer to several complaints laid against you; and if you appear not to your summons, the King vows you shall answer it with your life.—Reynard hearing this, ran into one of his holes, where he plotted how he might bring the Bear to disgrace, whom he knew loved him not. At last he came out of his holes saying, Dear uncle you are welcome, I was busy when you spoke, in saying my evening devotion. I am sorry you have taken this long journey, for I intended to have been at court to-morrow; indeed I wish we were there now, since I have left off eating meat, my body is swelled and distempered with eating of so many honey-combs through wantonness, that I fear its consequences.—How!

quoth Bruin do you make so light of honey-combs, which is meat for the Emperor? Nepliew help me to some, and I will be your friend for ever. — Quoth the Fox, well I will bring you to a place where you shall have as much of it as you can eat: at this the Bear laughed till he could hardly stand. Well thought Reynard, you soon will laugh on the other side of the mouth. So he brought him to a carpenters yard wherein stood a great oak tree with two great wedges in it, and the cleft open. Dear uncle, said the Fox, be careful, for within this tree is much honey; pray eat moderate, for a surfeit is dangerous. — Never fear you that, said Bruin; so he entered the tree with eagerness, and thrust his head into the cleft quite over his ears; which the Fox perceiving, pulled out the wedges, and the Bear was locked fast in, and roared out hideously; while the Fox at a distance said, Is the honey good, uncle? do you like it? pray do not surfeit yourself with it; then left him and went to his castle. The Bears noise brought out the carpenter and his neighbours with great sticks and staves; and the Bear seeing so many

enemies, at last wrenched his head out of the tree, leaving behind him his skin and ears : upon this the people fell on him, and beat him most woefully ; however he at last got from them, bitterly cursing the Fox, who had brought him to this misery.—In great pain and grief he at length arrived at the King's court, where he cried out, Behold dread sovereign, for doing your royal will and pleasure I am come to this disgrace. Then said the King how durst h. do this? I swear by my crown I will take such revenge as shall make him tremble.

Upon this was summoned another council, when it was agreed to send Tibert the Cat.



C H A P. V.

Tibert the Cat's Ambassy to Reynard;
with the bad Success of it.



TIBERT was loath to go on this message, but at length, fearing the king's displeasure, undertook it; and arriving at Malepardus, he found the Fox standing at his castle gate, to whom he thus addressed himself, Health to my cousin Reynard, the King by me summonses you to the court, on sure pain of death for the refusal. — Welcome cousin, I obey the command, and wish my sovereign all happiness; only let me desire you to stay

all night, and early in the morning I will go with you.—I am content to stay, says Tibert, you speak like a gentleman.—Truly says the Fox, I have but one honeycomb left, what think you of it for supper? I had rather have a mouse, replied Tibert.—A mouse dear cousin! here is a son hard by that hath a barn full of mice. Dear Reynard, lead me thither, and I will be your friend for ever.—Now the Fox had the night before got into the parson's barn and stole a fat hen, which so exasperated the priest, that he sat a snare to catch him, of which the Fox being apprized, had escaped: To this hole brings the Cat, saying, Go in here, and you will soon get your belly full, I will wait for you till you come out. But may I go in safely said the Cat, for Priests are very subtle. Cousin, said the Fox, I never knew you a coward before. Puff being ashamed at this reproof, sprung in, and was quickly caught by the neck; which as soon as the Cat felt, he leaped back again, so that the snare closed faster, and had like to have strangled him, so that he exclaimed bitterly against Reynard, who scornfully said, Tibert, dost thou

Love mice ? but the Cat mewed sadly.
 The priest rising out of his bed, called up
 his servant, saying, We have caught the
 Fox that stole our Hens ; and coming to
 Tibert, smote him with a great staff, and
 struck out one of his eyes, The Cat
 thinking his death near, leaped between
 the Priests legs, and fastened on his geni-
 tals ; which when his wife saw, swore
 she would rather lose the whole offering
 of seven years, than lose her husband's
 concerns. This threw the priest into a
 swoon, so they all left the Cat, and the
 Fox returned to his castle, thinking Ti-
 bert past recovery ; but he seeing his
 his foes busy about the priest, gnawed
 the cord asunder, and made her escape
 out of the hole, going roaring to court
 with the losf of one eye and a bruised
 body ; so that when the King beheld him
 he was angry, and took counsil once more
 how to be revenged on the Fox.

C H A P. VII.

The Brock's Embassie to Reynard, the Fox's Confession, and their Arrival at Court.

THEN said the King, Go your, Sir Grimbard, but take heed, for Reynard is very subtle. Brock thanked his Majesty, and taking his leave, went to Malepardus, and found Reynard and his wife sporting with their young ones. — Having saluted them, he said, Take heed uncle that absence from the court doth not do you more harm than you think for; the complaints against you are many and great: this is the third summons, and if you delay coming you and yours will find no mercy, for in three days your castle will be demolished, all your kindred made slaves, and you a publick example; unless you can make your innocence appear; and the which I doubt not you have discretion to do.—Very true nephew replied Reynard, I will go with you, not only to clear myself, but to the shame of my enemies; many of which I have at

court : so taking leave of his family he and Grimbard set out for Sandem the King's palace. — On their way Reynard make the following confession unto his nephew Grimbard : Blame me not dear cousin, if my life be full of care ; for I strive to blot out my sins by repentance, that my soul may be at quiet : I have grievously offended against Ganticleer the Cock and his children ; my uncle Bruin the Bear, and Tibert the Cat ; nay I've abused and slandered the King and Queen ; I have betrayed Hugrim the Wolf by calling him Uncle, when he is no kin to me ; I made him bind his foot in the bell-rope to teach him to ring, but the peal had like to have cost him his life ; I taught him to catch fish, by which he was sorely bang'd ; I led him to the parson's house to steal bacon ; I stole a fine fat hen sat before the priest for his dinner, in doing which he espied and pursued me, when I was obliged to let the hen go, and creep into a hole ; but the priest espying Hugrim, cried this is he, strike ! strike ! so my enemies fell upon the Wolf, and almost killed him. — But for all this I ask forgiveness.

Here on thier way they met a Pullin, at which the Fox glanced his eye (for the ill that was bred in the bone stuck) which Brock taking notice of, said, Fie dissembling cousin, why wander your eyes after the Pullin?—You wrong me nephew said the Fox, my eyes wandered not; I was just saying a Pater-Noster for the souls of the Pullen I have formerly slain; in which devotion you hindered me.

By this time they were come to the palace, and Reynard quaked for fear, on account of the many and great crimes he had to answer for.



C H A P. VIII.

Reynard's Excuse before the King, his Trial and Condemnation.

AT the news of Reynards arrival all sorts of the King's subjects from the highest to the lowest, prepared themselves to accuse him.—Though Reynard's heart trembled, yet he kept his countenance, and went as proudly and unconcerned through the streets, as though he were the King's Son, and entirely innocent of any offence.—When he came before the King, he said, Heaven preserve your Majesty, there never came before you a more loyal subject than myself, and so will die; I know there are several in your court that seek my life; but I am persuaded your Majesty hates slanderers.—Peace, traitorous Reynard, replied the King, thinkest thou to deceive me also: Know that the peace which I commanded you have broken; therefore, thou Devil amongst the good, with what face can you pretend to love me? when all

these before me can testify against thee ?

— Said the Fox, my Liege, if Bruin's crown be bloody with stealing honey, and Tibert loses her eye by getting into the priest's barn to steal mice ; when they should have been diligent in your majesty's embassy, can I help that ? O my dread Sovereign, I am as innocent as the child unborn ; however, use me as you please.

— Upon this, Bruin the Bear, Bellin the Ram, Kaward the Hare, Isegrim the Wolf, Brueel the Goose, Boulden the Ais, Borell the Bull, and Canticleer the Cock with their children, all with one voice cried out against the Fox ; all which caused the King to order his trial to be immediately brought on.

A parliament was summoned, and after a long trial, in the course of which the Fox answered every thing with much craft, he was condemned ; whereupon Grimbard, and the rest of his kindred left the court, as not enduring to see him executed. The King seeing so many depart, said, Though Reynard had some faults, yet he had many friends. — This musing of the king made the Cat, the Bear, and the Wolf jealous lest the king

should retract Reynard's sentence, and was angry at the delay of his execution ; to forward which Tibert produced the cord in he was hanged in the priests house, and they put it round Reynards neck, who said, I do not fear death ; I saw my father die, and he soon vanished ; death is familiar to me ; but I beseech your Majesties (who were both feated to see the execution) to grant me but one request before I die ; that is, that I may unload my conscience, and beg the assistance of your prayers, that I may be made happy hereafter.



C H A P.

REYNARD THE FOX

C H A P. IX.

Reynard's Confession and Pardon.

NO W every one began to pity Reynard, and prevailed with the King to grant his request; which being done, he thus began:—Help me ye powers above, for I can see none but whom I have offended; in my youth I used to be much with the lambs, delighting in their bleating, till at last biting one of them, I tasted the sweetnes of their blood, and could not forbear ever since. This drew me into the woods among the goats, where I slew and eat some young kids: this made me more hardy, so I fell to killing Hens, Geese, and other Pullen; for all was nith that come to net. Afterwards I fell into bad company, as Hesgrim, who pretended to be my kinsman; we grew at last so intimate, that he stole the great things, and I the small; he murdered the Nobles, and I the meaner subjects: I speak this plainly, he had plate and jewels more than ten carts could carry. — Ah! said the King, where is all this treasure?

—It was stolen my Liege, said the Fox ; but had it not been stolen as it was, it might have cost your Majesty's life.—Discover the matter immediately, said the Queen.—I am willing to discharge my conscience before I die ; it is true the King was to have been killed by his own subjects, I must confess by some of my nearest kindred ; it was thus, My father digging in the ground found the King's treasure, whereupon he was so proud, that he scorned the rest of the beasts of the wilderness : at last he caused Tibert the Cat to go to Bruin the Bear in the forest of Arden, to do him homage, and promised to set the crown upon Bruin's head ; then he sent for his wife, Hegrim the Wolf, and Tibert the Cat, amongst whom it was agreed to murder your Majesty, and make Bruin King ; but it happened that my nephew Grimbard being got drunk, discovered it to Sluggard his wife, who in great secrecy told it my wife, and she discovered it to me. It grieved me to think a ravenous Bear should depose you ; but being desirous to find out this treasure which my father hid, I at last by constant watching did, and I and

my wife removed. The plot being thus carried on with secrecy, when my father went to the cave and found his treasure all taken away, he for madness hanged himself.—All this is true, I am now ready to die, my conscience being eased.

The King and Queen hearing this, hoping to get from Reynard this treasure, released him from the gibbet, desiring him to discover where it lay.—Rather you than my enemies, said the Fox.—Fear not Reynard, said the Queen, the King shall spare thy life.—Madam, replied the King, will you believe the Fox? know you not his quality is to lie and steal?—In these circumstances my Lord, you may believe him.—Well madam, for this time I will be ruled by you, and pardon him all his offences, with this promise, That if ever he offends again, he and all his posterity shall be destroyed.

C H A P

C H A P. X.

Reynard Restored to Favour, and preferred.

THEN said the King, Reynard, you shall do us homage ; and for your discoveries I will make you one of the Lords of my council ; discharge your trust, and govern by truth and equity , henceforth I will be ruled by your wisdom, and under me you shall be chief governor.

Reynards friends thanked the King, and returned with the Fox, who was glad he had sped so well, having caused Bruin and Tibert to be destroyed, who sought his life.

Arriving at Malepardus there was great feasting and rejoicing at the Fox's good fortune ; after which Reynard thanked them for the love and honour done him, protesting to be their friend and servant for ever ; and so shaking hands, they departed.

F I N I S.